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Freedom, Causality, Fatalism and Early Stoic Philosophy

SOPHIE BOTROS

Introduction

The philosophy of the early Stoics is all too often interpreted in modern terms: their determinism has been compared to Laplace's,[1] their views on causality represented as Humean[2] and their account of freedom and responsibility characterized as soft determinist.[3] This tendency may seem innocuous enough, even if one judges as misguided attempts at giving ancient thinkers a coat of modern analytic varnish. But, as we shall see, analytic respectability is only purchased at a price and much that is bizarrely original in the Stoic theories is lost as a consequence.

I am not however suggesting any radical revision of recent interpretations of the Stoic account of causality, in discussing which I merely aim to provide the necessary background for the subsequent discussion of Stoic freedom which is my main concern. On the latter issue, misunderstanding of the Stoic texts is acute and extensive. Remarkably, there is an almost total failure (apparently stretching back to the ancient commentators) to recognize that philosophers who were concerned with both determinism and freedom could treat these topics in virtual isolation from each other. Consequently, interpretations almost invariably reflect some kind of sensed conflict between the two ideas. Some commentators (amongst

[1] S. Sambursky, *Physics of the Stoics* (London, 1971), p. 58. All further references to this work are given as Sam: PS.

[2] R. Sorabji, *Necessity, Cause and Blame* (London, 1980), p. 66. All further references to this work are given as Sor: NCB.

[3] R. Sorabji, 'Causation, Laws and Necessity' in *Doubt and Dogmatism*, ed. Schofield, Burnyeat and Barnes (Oxford, 1980), pp. 280-282. All further references to this work are given as Sor: DD; A. Long, 'Freedom and Determinism in the Stoic Theory of Human Action' in *Problems in Stoicism*, ed. Long (London, 1971), pp. 173-199. All further references to this work are given as Lg: PIS. See also P. L. Donini, 'Fato e Voluntà Umana in Crisippo', *Atti dell' Accademia delle Scienze di Torino* 109, 1974-5, 1-44.

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them, St. Augustine, *City of God*, V, 10) held, for instance, that the Stoics simply exempted the act of choice from causal determination. More often, commentators, recognizing the all-inclusive nature of Stoic determinism, disagree as to whether the early Stoics were uncompromising anti-libertarians (Taylor,[4] Aune[5]) or merely soft determinists (Long,[3] Sharples[6]) of a rather lame (Sorabji[3]) or even disingenuous (Alexander of Aphrodisias,[7] Nemesius[8]) kind.

I shall try to show however that the possibility of a conflict between freedom and determinism never clearly occurred to the Stoics since by modern standards (and even by those of ancient commentators,[9] writing only two to four hundred years later) they had a defective conception of freedom. In particular, I shall suggest that they cannot be construed as precursors of soft determinism, either in the version originally associated with Moore, Schlick and Ayer (the most frequent interpretation amongst contemporary commentators) or in its more recent formulation by Davidson.[10] In thus demonstrating that attempts to interpret early Stoic doctrines in terms of modern philosophical categories are for the most part misguided, I hope indirectly to restore to early Stoic thought its strangeness and originality, whilst my analysis may also possibly offer new insights into current accounts of freedom and determinism.

[4] 'Determinism', in *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, ed. P. Edwards (London, 1967) II, p. 360.

[5] 'Possibility', in *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, VI, p. 420.

[6] *Alexander of Aphrodisias on Fate* (London, 1983), p. 9. Sharples asserts that since 'Chrysippus was concerned to preserve human responsibility in the context of his deterministic system ... his position is one of "soft determinism" '. But the soft determinist typically admits a prima facie incompatibility between freedom/responsibility and determinism and then shows how this can be overcome. No such admission, or subsequent strategy, is, as we shall see, apparent in the work of the early Stoics, with the possible exception of the Dog Tied to Waggon Analogy attributed to them by Hippolytus (cf. section 3).

[7] *De Fato*, 14. All further references to this work are given as Alex: DeF.

[8] *De Natura Hominis*, 35. All further references to this work are given as Nem: NH.

[9] See Alexander in *De Fato* and Plutarch in *De Stoicorum Repugnantiis*. All further references to the latter work are given as Pl: deSR.

[10] G. E. Moore, *Ethics* (Oxford, 1947), ch. 6; A. J. Ayer, *Philosophical Essays* (London, 1959), ch. 12; M. Schlick, *Problems of Ethics* (New York, 1962), pp. 149-151; D. Davidson, see particularly 'Freedom to Act' in *Actions and Events* (Oxford, 1980), p. 75.

1. *Causality, Determinism and Necessity*

The early Stoics were, as is well known, extreme determinists. This determinism was associated with a theory of causation which entailed that i) every event has a cause; 'they hold that not one of the things in the world either exists or comes into being without a cause' (Alex: DeF, 22) and that ii) given the same antecedent conditions the same outcome must ensue (sometimes referred to as a regularity thesis, see Sor: NCB, 66). The following remark, among many others (see also Pl: DeSR, 1045, b, c, and Nem: DeNH, 35) suggests that they took (i) to imply (ii):

> ...there is an impossibility in things turning out in a certain manner at one moment and not so at another, in as much as all the same contingencies arise concerning the cause and that of which it is the cause... If (things could turn out in different ways in different circumstances) ... then there (would be) motion without cause. (Alex: DeF, 22).

This belief that no event can occur unless there exist sufficient antecedent conditions for its occurrence is often thought to be what led the Stoics to envisage events as parts of an inexorable Causal Chain stretching throughout space and time, referred to by Chrysippus as 'the continuous Chain of things that exist' (Galen) and characterized by Alexander as follows:

> the prior events are causes of those following them, and in this manner all things are bound together, and thus nothing can happen in the Cosmos which is not a cause to something else following it and linked with it... (DeF, 22).

But how exactly is the notion of causal *necessity* implicit in passages such as Alexander's above to be understood? According to modern causal necessitarians, causes are not merely necessary conditions of their effects.[11] For this would jeopardize the possibility of prediction, being compatible with the occurrence of random events. For instance, on the 'necessary condition' view, A could be said to cause B, even if, quite inexplicably, B sometimes failed to follow A. Consistency with determinism, therefore, requires that causes be both necessary and sufficient, in the circumstances, for their effects.

Could such an analysis however really capture the sense in which the early Stoics took causal relations to be necessary? It might perhaps seem so since modern causal necessitarians attempt (as Hume did not) to distinguish causal from mere accidental sequences of events by interpreting the expres-

[11] For this kind of account, see G. E. M. Anscombe, 'Causality and Determinism' in *Causation and Conditionals*, ed. Sosa (Oxford, 1975), p. 63.

sion 'necessary and sufficient condition' counterfactually. Thus if A causes B, then (i) B wouldn't have occurred, if A hadn't occurred (necessary condition) and (ii) if B hadn't been going to occur, A wouldn't have occurred (sufficient condition).

But the Stoics said similar things: on the one hand, events 'depend by necessity on their causes' (Alex: DeF, 22) and, on the other (as in Sambursky's gloss on a passage from Alexander) 'every time A is restored, B must follow' (PS, 54). Even so one may doubt whether the Stoic account of causation is adequately represented in terms of the modern account. For, first, modern writers take the source of causal necessity to lie ultimately in specific laws of nature which sustain counterfactuals like those above. But since the Stoics mentioned no laws of such specific content, their notion of causal necessity would have been independent of the existence of any laws of nature.

Again, whilst the modern account may in some sense legitimize talk of causal necessitation it remains logically possible on this, as on almost any post-Humean account, for an event which has so far always caused a particular event suddenly not to do so. For cause and effect are regarded (at least under some description) as logically distinct events. But Hume's separation of causal from logical necessity undermined the traditional assumption that causation involved an indissoluble metaphysical tie between events. Yet surely some version of this latter assumption is to be expected in the work of philosophers to whom the Humean distinction was unknown?

I shall not however pursue the issue of whether the early Stoics regarded causes as, for instance, actively constraining their effects (though Fitzgerald's early translation of Alexander's *De Fato*: Scholartis Press, London, 1931, suggests that they did); nor shall I question the metaphorical status of Stoic claims that effects are bound or fettered to their causes, or that the whole chain of consequences of a particular event lay dormant, coiled up (cf. Aulus Gellius's 'coils of fate' and Cicero's 'unwinding rope'[12]) in the event itself, only waiting to be inexorably unravelled. But the related distinction between natural and artificial divination poses interesting questions both about the nature of their notion of causal necessity and about the possible genesis of early Stoic fatalism. Consider, for instance, the following passage:

[12] *De Divinatione*, I, LVI, 127: SVF II, 944. All further references to the *De Divinatione* are given as Cic: DD. The Aulus Gellius quotation is from his *Noctes Atticae* VII, II, 5. All further references to this work are given as Aul. Gell: NA.

> Since all things happen by fate, if there were a man whose mind could discern the inner connections of all causes, then surely he would never be mistaken in any prediction he might make. For he who knows the causes of future events necessarily knows what every future event will be. But since such knowledge is possible only to a god, it is left to man to predict the future by means of certain signs which indicate what will follow them.[13]

What exactly is signified by the contrast between the gods' insight[14] into causes, which leads to infallible knowledge of the future, and men's fallible predictions based on signs and omens ('the inspection of entrails, lightnings and portents' (Cic: DD, II, XI, 26) which, though they regularly precede, are not causally related to the events they presage? Perhaps the contrast points toward that long out-moded paradigm of causal explanation which tries to go beyond the brute fact of events regularly succeeding one another by making the causal relation somehow transparent to the understanding.[15] Did the Stoics perhaps envisage the gods as seeing not just what will happen (as do men) but why, due to their perception of the inner nature of the connection involved, it must happen? And was it thus the peculiar way the Stoics construed *causality* that slanted their determinism in the fatalistic direction expressed by their adage 'everything that will happen must happen' (Aulus Gellius)?[16]

Whilst it is impossible to answer these questions conclusively, central commentators, such as Cicero, assert that there were close links between the Stoic affirmation that there were 'eternal causes that forbid anything to fall out otherwise than it will fall out' (Cic: DeFato, XI, 26 - XII, 28), their fatalism and their belief in divination. According to Cicero, their fatalism was dependent upon their belief in divination ('if', he states, 'the theory of divination is correct, then the potency of fate will be proven'[17]), whilst

[13] Compare Wittgenstein (*Tractatus* 5.1362): 'future (actions) cannot be known now. We could only know them if causality were an inner necessity like that of logical deduction'. It is tempting to suggest that it was because the Stoics, unlike the early Wittgenstein, regarded causality as an 'inner necessity' that they held that future events *can* be known now.

[14] Cicero says that human beings can only achieve such insight when the soul is 'inspired by frenzy or set free by sleep' (DD, I, LVI, 128 and LVII, 130; II, XI, 27).

[15] But the conception of a causal relation that was thus transparent to the understanding lingered on in the kind of account given by philosophers like Prichard and Campbell of the relation between the willing subject and the world.

[16] NA, VII, II, 5; see also Alex: DeF, 16 'the things that must be will be' and Cic: DD, I, LVI, 126 'Nothing occurs that was not to be'.

[17] *De Fato*, V, 10-VI, 12. All further references to this work are given as Cic: DeF. See also Cic: DD, II, VIII, 21.

divination, requiring for its cogency that propositions about future events be already true (or false) at the time of prophecy, was in turn only possible (for the Stoics linked the truth of bivalency with their causal theory[18]) because future events were held to be causally determined, and thus necessitated, by states of affairs existing at the time of prophecy. ('Apollo', writes Cicero, 'could not have foretold the fate of Oedipus if there were no causes foreordained in the nature of things making it necessary for him to murder his father'.[19]) But of course the Stoics may have been first convinced of the validity of divination, with its fatalistic implications, and then sought to uphold bivalency and the necessity of the Great Causal Chain in order to support their prior belief in divination, and not vice versa as suggested above.

It may even be that the Stoics held that the succession of events in the Great Causal Chain was necessary, not because they regarded causation as itself a quasi-logical relation, but because they envisaged fate as a god who deliberately imposed this causal order upon events. Calcidius, for instance (in a passage perhaps too easily dismissed as metaphorical) represents the Stoics as arguing that if the gods can foretell future events, including even 'the movements of our minds', this is because their occurrence was from the very beginning decreed (*decreta*) by fate 'for if fate had not decided beforehand the prophets would not have had access to its plan' (ad Timaeum, ep. 160).

The Stoic position, as so far outlined, though in certain respects unacceptable today, remains broadly recognizable as a type of causal determinism. Even Calcidius's account, despite the implicit personification of fate, refers to a causal chain, the definitive feature of deterministic theory. There are other passages, however, expressing Stoic pantheism and thus perhaps even more alien to contemporary thought than Calcidius's personified fate, which do not mention a causal chain.

Alexander, for instance, writes that the Stoics identified fate with 'nature' and with 'the reason according to which the Whole is organized', asserting it to be a god:

> present in all that is and comes to be and in this way employ(ing) the individual nature of everything for the organization of the Whole. (DeF, 22)

[18] Cicero (DeF, C, 21) writes that the Stoics rejected the (Aristotelian) claim that not every proposition is either true or false since this suggested that some future events may not have present causes.

[19] DeF, XIV, 33. See also Cic: DD, II, XLIX, 102-LXIII, 130.

Plotinus represents the Stoic view by way of an analogy: fate is described as 'the principle of the universe... from which all things are deduced... and which pervades everything as cause' and

> produces the universe, not only all the other things that come into being but even our thoughts... just as in an animal each part has a movement which comes not from itself, but from the ruling part of the soul which is in it. (SVF, II, 946)

Since these passages appear to be an attempt at explaining the same phenomena as the previous deterministic ones, but this time in terms of some kind of teleological process, involving the idea of the universe as an organic unity possessed of a ruling principle working toward the continued integration and well-being of the Whole, there appears to be a radical incompatibility in the Stoic account of causation, unless we assume that a teleological account can in principle always be reduced to a deterministic one. Moreover, these passages suggest that the Stoic's fatalism was an expression of his feeling of powerlessness as he contemplated the immensity of this Whole of which he was only a minute part – a feeling nevertheless mitigated by the identification of his personal ends with those of the Whole.

Despite these teleological and pantheistic aspects, I shall however as far as possible follow contemporary commentators in taking the early Stoics to have been extreme causal determinists of a recognizably modern kind, and will leave it to become gradually apparent just how incomplete our understanding of their theories of freedom and action will remain, if we ignore these more ancient, if less dominant, elements in their thought.

2. *Freedom and Alternative Possibilities*

What kind of account of freedom would be viable against this unpromising determinist background? Now most philosophers[20] assume that freedom involves alternative possibilities of action, if not of choice (as the strict libertarian more stringently requires), and it might seem, as modern commentators have generally assumed, that the Stoics must also find a sense in which actions, not actually performed, were nonetheless possible. And at first sight it might appear that they did provide for just such unactualized possibilities. For, in spite of their determinism, scholars distinguish no less

[20] See e.g. P. van Inwagen 'It seems to be generally agreed that the concept of free will should be understood in terms of the power or ability of agents to act otherwise than they in fact do': 'The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism', in *Free Will*, ed. Watson (Oxford, 1982), p. 49. See also Moore, o.c., p. 126, and P. Nowell-Smith, *Ethics* (Harmondsworth, 1954), p. 273.

than four senses in which, for the Stoics, an event, or action, which will never actually occur, is nonetheless possible.

One of these senses of possibility was cast in terms of propositions and their truth values and is irrelevant to this discussion. As to the other senses, in the second, an event, or action, was held to be possible if nothing was *known* that might prevent its occurrence (though if it will not occur then, for the Stoics, causes already exist which prevent it - Alex: DeF, 10: SVF II 959), while in the third, an action or event is possible 'if', as Alexander puts it, 'it is not prevented by circumstances from happening' (DeF, 10: SVF II 959). A fourth kind of possibility, apparently adopted by the Stoics from Philo, resembles our notion of natural power or capacity. Philo's example however, of a piece of wood which can be burnt but never will be since it is lying on the ocean bed, illustrates passive, rather than active, power.

It is however the third account of possibility which, as we shall see, when linked with Chrysippus's distinction between the external and internal causes of human action (Cic: DeF XVIII, 41 - XIX, 43: SVF II 974) provides the most apparently persuasive grounds for claims that the Stoics held similar views to modern soft determinists[2] on the question of freedom and responsibility. I shall try to show however that the Stoics did not utilize this last notion of possibility in their account of freedom, and that any claim that they were soft determinists, which is based on this supposition, is false. I start however with some general objections to the view that the Stoics exploited any notion of possibility in their account of freedom. This will also give me an opportunity briefly to refute an attempt to use the Stoic notion of natural power to claim a resemblance between the Stoic position and modern soft determinism.

Now a close scrutiny of the relevant passages (Alex: DeF, 10; Cic: DeF, VII; Pl: DeSR, 1055e) suggests that the Stoic definitions of possibility were presented solely as a means of refuting Diodorus Cronus's claim (in the famous Master Argument) that only what is true, or will be true, is possible, and that they were not attempts to safeguard some notion of freedom. It is not even clear whether Diodorus himself drew the kind of deterministic implications from his argument that might have threatened freedom.[21]

Yet the early commentators interpreted (what was for them) the Stoic failure to establish a sense in which events which do not actually occur are nevertheless possible as implying that we cannot have free will, thus *giving the impression* that the Stoic definitions of possibility were themselves

[21] It has been suggested for instance that his interest was solely in the production of an extensional logic (Robert Blanché, cited by Sorabji, NCB, 104).

originally deployed to preserve freedom. Thus, for instance, Alexander, in the 10th chapter of *De Fato* rejected the Stoic arguments against Diodorus and in the next chapter inferred that as a consequence the Stoics robbed men of their freedom. Likewise, Cicero, having examined the Stoics' reply to Diodorus in chapter VII of his *De Fato*, concludes in chapter IX that their insistence upon 'an everlasting chain of causes' both invalidated their claims about possibility and ruled out human freedom.

But the examples used by Cicero in chapter VII to illustrate the sense in which, for the Stoics, 'things which will not be are also "possible" ' (et quae non sint futura posse) betray no hint of an intention on his part to connect them with Stoic freedom, with e.g. the Stoics' assertion that human action is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, 'in our power' or, as Cicero renders it, 'in nostra potestate'. Even the example of the jewel which, according to Chrysippus, 'could be broken, even if it never will be' (...ut frangi hanc gemmam etiam si id numquam futuram sit) shows only that the Stoics, like many of today's determinists, acknowledged that objects could have powers which might never be actualized. The example does not even attribute these powers to human beings; for the assertion that some jewel has a (passive) potentiality for breaking does not entail that any human being possesses the (active) power to break it.

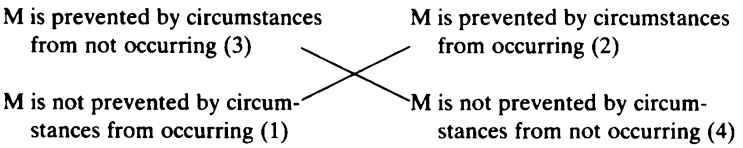
Suppose, however, that the Stoics did attribute to us a capacity regardless of whether it was ever exercised. We still could not infer (as does Long[22] with regard to Cicero's example) that it follows that the Stoics held, in a sense similar to that of modern soft determinists, that we could sometimes have done otherwise than we did. For, despite ambiguities surrounding the word 'could' as it occurs in modern soft determinist ascriptions of freedom it at least reflects common usage in as far as it never denotes *mere* capacity to act, i.e. without regard to whether or not external circumstances prevent the exercise of the capacity.

Turning now to Alexander, the impression, given in chapters 10 and 11 of his *De Fato*, that the Stoic attack on Diodorus's elimination of possibility was linked with a defence of the notion of freedom, is so completely at variance with other passages in his work as to seem incorrect. For both in chapters 13 and 14 he stressed that the Stoic notion of freedom, or of what is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, did *not* involve alternative possibilities of action. 'Doing away with men's possession of the power of choosing and doing opposites', he writes, '(the Stoics) say that what is attributable to us is what comes about through us'.

[22] In correspondence with me.

But this textual evidence might be thought inconclusive, and Alexander's interpretation of the Stoics, in chapters 13 and 14 of his *De Fato* has been disputed.[23] I turn therefore to consider the more specific question mentioned above which concerns the Stoics' third notion of possibility ('what is not prevented by circumstances from happening'). Did Chrysippus use this notion of possibility in developing the distinction between the external and internal causes of action, on which he based his account of freedom (or of 'what is in our power')? Did it seem as crucial to him, as to modern soft determinists, to show that certain actions are possible though they will never occur (since the 'eternal causal nexus' forbids it), whilst the opposites of actions that will occur are not necessarily impossible? If so, then perhaps he, like many modern soft determinists, sought to analyze freedom in terms of alternative possibilities of action, even within a deterministic framework.

The details of such an account might be worked out as follows. For any action M, M is (1) possible if it is not prevented by circumstances from occurring. M is (2) impossible if it is prevented by circumstances from occurring. M is (3) necessary if it is prevented by circumstances from not occurring, and M is (4) non-necessary (i.e. –M is possible) if it is not prevented by circumstances from not occurring. This can be expressed in the form of a square of opposition as follows:


M is prevented by circumstances from not occurring (3)
M is prevented by circumstances from occurring (2)
M is not prevented by circumstances from occurring (1)
M is not prevented by circumstances from not occurring (4)

Next consider the key passage in which Cicero attributes to Chrysippus the distinction between the external and internal causes of action:

> If auxiliary and proximate (external) causes are not in our power it does not follow that even impulse (and the action that follows upon it) is not in our power ... this conclusion will hold against those who so introduce destiny that they (also) annex necessity; but it will not hold against those who distinguish antecedent (i.e. auxiliary and proximate) causes from perfect and principal ones... For although assent cannot occur unless aroused by a sense-presentation (i.e. without an external cause), yet ... assent (the internal cause of action) has this as its proximate not principal cause ... Just as someone who pushes a drum forward gives it a beginning

[23] See C. Stough, 'Stoic Determinism and Moral Responsibility' in *The Stoics*, ed. Rist (Berkeley, 1978), pp. 203-227, and M. Reesor, 'Necessity and Fate in Stoic Philosophy' also in Rist, pp. 187-202. Both these attempts to challenge Alexander's interpretation, however, seem philosophically confused.

> of movement, but not its capacity to roll, so the visual object which presents itself ... will mark its image on the mind; but assent will be in our power (sed adsensio nostra erit in potestate) and ... once it has been given an external stimulus (extrinsicus pulsa) it will move itself for the rest by its own force and nature (quod reliquum est, suapte vi et natura movebitur). (DeF, XVIII, 41 –XIX, 43: SVF II 974)

I will now attempt to render this distinction made by Chrysippus between an action's external and internal causes in terms of my previous account of possibility in such a way as to produce a version of freedom which resembles that of modern soft determinism.

Suppose that M is the action of drinking brandy. Then (1) M is not prevented by circumstances from occurring, and is thus possible, if no external obstacles prevent an agent Y from M-ing. But Y may still not M because he lacks the desire. Y may dislike brandy and so not drink it. In this case, the action M, though possible, will not be performed because it lacks an internal cause, i.e. in Stoic terms, Y does not assent to its performance and feels no impulse to perform it. The Stoic soft determinist will therefore claim that Y could[24] have M-ed, if he had chosen to,[25] M-ing is in Y's power and thus Y is free with regard to M. (But whatever Y does is still entirely determined.)

(2) M is prevented by circumstances from occurring, and is thus impossible if external obstacles prevent Y from M-ing. Suppose Y likes brandy but is unable to take the glass from the table because his hands are bound. We might say that the fact that Y's hands are bound is, in Stoic terms, the external cause of Y's not M-ing. The Stoic soft determinist can then claim that Y could not have M-ed, even if he had chosen to, M-ing is not in Y's power and thus he is unfree in regard to M.

(3) M is prevented by circumstances from not occurring, and is thus necessary, if external circumstances predominate over the agent's own desire, i.e. in Stoic terms, the force that comes from the agent himself, in producing M. Thus Y may be so pathologically dominated by another that, irrespective of his own desires, he does whatever the other orders. He may, for instance, drink the brandy though he loathes it, and knows it is bad for

[24] Perhaps reference to Y's physical capacity to pick up the glass is also required if picking up the glass is to be described as a 'real' alternative for Y. But not all writers, particularly those concerned with the political dimension of the concept of freedom, would agree, and, in any case, I wish to present the simplest version of the theory.

[25] I take it that choosing to act in a given way is not for the soft determinist a condition of possessing, but only of exercising, the power to act in that way. Consequently 'He could have M'd if he'd chosen to' might be less misleadingly rendered as 'He could have M'd but didn't choose to'.

him. Or suppose that Y is an alcoholic and that the very sight of the brandy causes him to gulp it down, despite his resolution to resist it. In both cases, the Stoic determinist will say that Y could not have done otherwise, even if he had chosen to. It is not in Y's power to refrain from M-ing and thus Y is not free in regard to M.

Finally (4), M is not prevented by circumstances from not occurring, and is thus non-necessary, if external circumstances do not predominate over the agent's own desires in producing M. Suppose that Y is neither dominated by his friend, nor an alcoholic and could have resisted the brandy if he had chosen to. Here it is in Y's power to refrain from M-ing and thus Y is free in regard to M.

Now it will be noted that in (1) and (2) freedom and its absence are construed in terms of whether or not there exist *constraints* which prevent an individual from acting in a certain way, whilst in (3) and (4) they are construed in terms of whether or not the individual's action is *compelled*. Both parts of this reading however present insuperable difficulties.

The main problem with the first half of the reading is that it misconstrues the Stoics' notion of an external cause as understood by Cicero. For this refers specifically to the sense-impression (φαντασία ὁρμητική) which provides us with an *incentive* for action (see also Plutarch: DeSR, 1056-1057), and not to an obstacle which *prevents* our acting and thus limits freedom. In the earlier example, Y's seeing the brandy would count as the external cause of his lifting the glass and drinking. But if there is no provision in the account of freedom attributed by Cicero to Chrysippus for the case of an individual who is prevented from acting in a certain way by the presence of obstacles (cf. (2) above) then the claim that we could have acted otherwise, and are thus free, *because* there exist no such constraints to our actions (cf. (1) above) loses its point.

The significance of this objection moreover is, I believe, neither narrowly terminological nor confined to Cicero's reading of the Stoics. For there is little evidence elsewhere in the ancient commentaries that the early Stoics, unlike so many later thinkers, ever construed freedom and its absence in terms of whether or not there exist hindrances to action. One of the nearest approximations to this idea is the following view, though it seems to have been attributed to the Stoics in this explicit form only by Nemesius:

> And whenever none of the external things given by fate resists (our) impulse (to walk), then walking will be completely in our power and we surely will walk. (NH, 35)

Alexander, by contrast, in one of the fullest discussions of early Stoic freedom to have survived (DeF, particularly 13), typically treated the question of whether certain movements were in our power as a question about whether these movements had their *source* in us (whether they were literally 'movement(s) from (our)selves' ἐξ ἑαυτῶν κίνησιν) and not whether, once initiated, these movements might encounter external obstacles. But isn't Nemesius's point at least implicit in Alexander's assertion that a stone (to whose behaviour he is comparing human action) must unless obstructed (μηδενὸς ἐμποδίζοντος) fall when dropped? But the context surrounding this phrase surely makes clear that Alexander's intention is to emphasize the rigorous necessity which, on the Stoic account, governs the stone's movement (and, by implication, human action), rather than to cite an instance where movement is not in the stone's power.

Furthermore in Alexander's own list of 'things *not* in our power' (DeF, 11), he includes 'eternal things' (i.e. the motion of the heavenly bodies), the past, states of affairs that are inevitable, and whatever is contingent upon men's actions; but he does not mention actions that we would be prevented from performing if we tried to perform them.[26]

Indeed it may perhaps appear symptomatic of just how far the early Stoics were from linking the idea of constraint with the issue of freedom that even when the late Stoic Epictetus[27] did eventually extend the expression 'in our power' to actions that we could perform 'without hindrance', he understood this term in a very different way from modern soft determinists. For Epictetus (rather like Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* and like modern libertarians) applied the term only to activity that we could never *conceivably* be hindered from performing, and since even simple bodily movements (not to mention complicated action sequences) could not pass this stringent test, willing alone remained a candidate for this description.

Turning now to the second half of the reading, a cursory glance at Cicero's formulation of Chrysippus's distinction between the external and internal causes of action (see again p. 283) might seem to suggest that, for Chrysippus, an action is in our power, and thus free, *provided* our assent and impulse are its 'principal' causes. So it might be thought that Chrysippus would have wanted to deny that an action is in our power where external forces predominate over assent and impulse (cf. my (3) above). But, as Alexander observed (in a claim which is neither purely empirical nor purely conceptual in contemporary terms), for the Stoics, our actions

[26] I am grateful to Dr R. Sharples for drawing my attention to this point.

[27] *The Discourse* and *Manual* (Oxford, 1916).

occur *only* 'through us' (δι'ἡμῶν) and therefore only as causal consequences of our assents and impulses:

> For, since not otherwise would the things produced by the creature's agency take place, if the creature had not acted according to impulse, but are produced according to its assent and initiative, while they are not so when assent is lacking, they say these things are in the creature's power. (DeF, 14)

And Cicero goes on to stress in the key quotation (as does Plutarch elsewhere, see DeSR, 1056, b, c) that the necessary precursors of action, though requiring external arousal, can never be wholly determined by external forces; indeed they would seem to represent, relative to the latter, independent forces, possessing in some sense a momentum of their own ('quod reliquum est, suapte vi et natura movebitur') of which action is the culmination. As Aulus Gellius asserted, even when we are apparently easily provoked by external stimuli into wrongdoing we are nevertheless responsible, on the Stoic view, for what we do; for external stimuli cannot, even in these cases, usurp the special and decisive[28] role of will (assent) and impulse in producing and sustaining action (NA, Bk. 7, II, 11-15).

It is not merely that external forces are causally insufficient to bring about action, as Cicero sometimes suggests (cf. his denial, in the continuation of the key passage, DeF, XVIII, that the external stimulus is a 'causa necessaria' or 'necessitating cause' of action) but, far more radically, as is apparent from the Greek, that they are not the *right kind* of cause to play this crucial role. Plutarch, for instance, characterized the external stimulus (on Chrysippus's view) as αἴτιον προκαταρκτικόν (a mere 'predisposing' cause) as opposed to αὐτοτελὲς αἴτιον (as, in its 'self-sufficiency' and 'independence', is assent). And this, given our knowledge of the etymology of the Greek terms (which however cannot be adequately translated into English) indicates fairly conclusively that two mutually exclusive categories of cause are here at issue.[29, 30]

[28] Aulus Gellius is not, like Cicero, merely explaining how action is produced; he is also trying to account for the *variation* in individual response to stimuli in terms of the different 'qualities of mind'.

[29] For an illuminating discussion of these different kinds of cause, see M. Frede, 'The Original Notion of Cause' in DD, pp. 217-249.

[30] I have ignored Cicero's contention that Chrysippus's distinction was expressly designed to allow the Stoics to 'escape necessity yet retain fate' since Chrysippus's distinction can be adequately formulated without reference to a supposition which, given the weight of contrary evidence, including Cicero's own testimony elsewhere in the *De Fato*, seems implausible, namely that the early Stoics understood by 'fate', not the whole Chain of Causes, but only a part of it.

If Chrysippus's external causes however could never conceivably predominate over assent and impulse in producing action, then we are left without an example of what it would be for an action to 'be prevented by circumstances from not occurring' or, in other words, for an action to be *compelled* (cf. (3) above). But then the typical soft determinist claim in (4) above that an individual could have done otherwise, and is thus free, *because* his actions were not compelled ceases to be intelligible within the Stoic framework.

So far my contention has been that Chrysippus's distinction between the external and internal causes of action was not an attempt to ensure that, in some sense, we could sometimes act otherwise than we do, and in this way to rescue freedom, as entailing alternative possibilities, from the clutches of Stoic determinism. Obscure as their conception of freedom may still be, we can at least be certain that the early Stoics did not think it required salvaging in this way. Nevertheless they *were* concerned to meet the charge that their fatalism excluded human influence upon events, and did so by asserting the causal indispensability not only of assent and impulse to action, but also of action to certain kinds of outcome, cf. Chrysippus's response to the famous Lazy Argument (Cic:De F, XXX; Calcidius: ad Timaeum, ep. 160).

Their reply however to the provocative counsel of inaction (on the grounds that if only those things will occur that are fated to occur then our efforts are in vain) only further serves to underline fate's inexorability: it is inconceivable, says Chrysippus, that Milo should wrestle without an opponent 'for "he will wrestle" is complex (and) without an opponent there is no wrestling'. But, since Milo is fated to wrestle, it is necessarily also fated that he will have an opponent. Likewise, Oedipus cannot be conceived unless Laius and Jocasta have intercourse; but since it is fated that Oedipus will be conceived, it follows that Laius and Jocasta are also fated to have intercourse.

We can now perhaps attempt a first shot at stating the differences, as so far revealed, between the early Stoic and the modern soft determinist accounts of freedom and responsibility, and suggest why these accounts are so easily and frequently confused. The *Stoic* account comprises two interconnected parts. Human action, or what is ἐφ'ἡμῖν ('in our power'), is distinguished from mere happening in terms of its special causal structure, of which assent and impulse (the nearest equivalents of the soft determinists' 'choice' and 'desire') are the most important constituent elements.

The charge that Stoic fatalism rules out human influence upon events is then answered by asserting the causal indispensability of action to certain kinds of outcome. But, it would seem, the only power granted to us by

Chrysippus, in his reply to the Lazy Argument, is the power to do what we *must* do in order that destiny be accomplished. It is perhaps hardly surprising then that the Stoic position has puzzled commentators, and has even led to charges of disingenuousness; for, disregarding the teleological, and possibly also the necessitarian, overtones, it is precisely this way of representing the human situation in a determined world that *hard* determinists exploit in order to show how *im*plausible it is to regard the individual as free in such a world.[31]

Now the modern soft determinist, like the Stoics, asserts that actions caused by our choices or desires are in our power. But, unlike them, he is not here elucidating the causal structure of action in general (i.e. as opposed to mere happening), but is distinguishing actions which are, from those which are *not* within our power. Moreover, in construing this distinction in terms of whether or not we are *compelled* to act as we do (or, with omissions, whether or not we are prevented from doing what we fail to do) he attempts to represent the power thus accorded (or denied) us as entailing, even within a deterministic framework, that we could do *otherwise* than we do or, in other words, that we are presented in some sense with alternative possibilities of action.[32]

Thus it is that, under one ambiguous and misleading formulation, the soft determinist account of freedom may seem to resemble that of the early Stoics. But to substantiate the claim that these ancient thinkers *were* soft determinists, in anything like the traditional sense, it would be necessary to show, not just that the Stoics *happened* to propound a theory of possibility, as well as of freedom, but that they *used* this account of possibility (whether explicitly, like Moore and Ayer,[10] or implicitly, like Schlick,[10] i.e. merely through the ideas of compulsion and constraint) to show how men may still be regarded as free in a determined world. No modern commentator has yet demonstrated that such a connection exists between the Stoic theories of freedom and possibility.

To conclude this section with just one example (but Long is another, see PIS, 189) consider Sorabji (NCB, 71) who, referring to what he calls 'the arguments designed to show that there is room for alternative possibilities', writes that 'the Stoic retreat from necessity constitutes one of several

[31] S. Cahn, *Fate, Logic and Time* (New Haven, 1967), assumes without question that Chrysippus, in his reply to the Lazy Argument, is propounding a fatalism which entails that 'no man has free will'.

[32] For a clear statement of these connections see J. Thorp, *Free Will* (London, 1980), p. 32; or see Ayer himself (o.c.).

strategies for avoiding the unfortunate implications of determinism for morality' (and thus presumably for a conception of action as in our power). My analysis has, I hope, already shown that this is precisely what remains to be proved.

3. *Willing Co-operation with Necessity: Two Interpretations of the Dog Tied to Waggon Analogy*

In a striking fragment attributed to Hippolytus, however, both Chrysippus and Zeno are said to have drawn an analogy between the situation of a dog tied to a waggon and that of men in relation to fate. This analogy is significant because, in contrast to everything said so far, it appears to suggest that, far from believing that determinism posed no threat to freedom, the early Stoics may have regarded the human situation in a determined world as primarily *un*free. Freedom could be achieved, but only by voluntarily consenting to do what we must in any case do:

> These men (Chrysippus and Zeno) maintained that everything was in accordance with fate (καθ'εἱμαρμένην) by using the following illustration. Suppose a dog to be tied to a waggon. If he wishes to follow, the waggon pulls him and he follows, so that his own power and necessity unite (literally: doing what is in his free power together with necessity ποιῶν καὶ τὸ αὐτεξούσιον μετὰ τῆς ἀνάγκης). But if he does not wish to follow, he will be compelled anyhow. The same is the case with mankind also. Even if they do not wish to follow, they will be absolutely forced to enter into the fated event. (SVF II, 975)[33]

One way of construing this passage would remove it entirely from the context of the free will/determinism controversy. This is to represent it as concerned with how we can be free, in the sense of spiritually content, in a world in which desire must often be unsatisfied and suffering is inevitable. The solution proposed by the Analogy, on this reading, is simply to accept[34] these unfortunate aspects of the human condition. A rather similar reading is that of Long who sees it as advice to the individual to be realistic in the pursuance of his goals (PIS, 192).

This reading might seem attractive since it evades conceptual and other difficulties to which the passage is, as we will see (and as Long notes, PIS, 193), otherwise subject. It also reflects the concern of early Stoic moral

[33] One other passage suggests a similar view: St. Augustine (*City of God*, V, 8) quotes these lines from Seneca's translation of Cleanthes' *Hymn*: 'Fate leads the willing, drags the reluctant feet'.

[34] For a discussion of this obscure notion, see my 'Acceptance and Morality' *Philosophy*, 58, 1983, 433-453.

philosophy with the relation between happiness and the possession of health and material goods.[35] There is in addition the suggestion of a continuity between the early and late Stoics, such as Epictetus and Seneca, who were preoccupied with the problem of attaining freedom, which they both regarded as a matter of how to come to terms with life's inevitable limitations and disappointments.

However, the early Stoic affirmation that happiness, the reward of living 'in agreement with nature' did not lie in the possession of material goods does not appear to have been advanced as a solution to the question of how to deal with suffering and loss, regarded as somehow *especially* inevitable. Moreover their exhortations to 'live in agreement with nature', rather than implying that individuals should adopt a certain attitude toward *unavoidable* misfortune, seems to have referred to the observance of a code of conduct which 'befits' or is 'natural' to men as rational beings.

The main objection however to construing the passage in this way is that Hippolytus states explicitly that Chrysippus's and Zeno's analogy illustrated the universal rule of fate (τὸ καθ' εἱμαρμένην εἶναι πάντα) and he represents the Stoics as linking this idea with ἀνάγκη or necessity. But in no other major context where 'fate' is identified with 'necessity' and said to 'rule all things' (Aul. Gell: NA, Bk 7, II, 1-5), or to be that 'according to which the whole universe is administered' (Alex: DeF, 22; Calcidius: ad Timaeum, ep. 160), or is referred to as 'a principle of universal nature' (Pl: DeSR, 1050), do the writers have in mind the *unhappy human* fate which preoccupied the late Stoics who scorned the theoretical bias of their predecessors. On the contrary, the context in each case makes plain (with the possible exception of the passage from Aulus Gellius) that the whole chain of causes and therefore the thesis of universal determinism itself is under discussion. Indeed the first Stoics considered the word εἱμαρμένη (its root being εἴρω or 'string beads') particularly appropriate to convey their notion of a Great Chain of Causes and introduced this usage of it. I shall take it then[36] that determinism is under discussion in the Hippolytus passage.

I want now to consider how plausible it would be to regard the Analogy as the Stoics' response to a 'libertarian' opponent who, knowing of their reputation as determinists, challenges their assertion that our actions are free and 'in our power' because they are caused by our own choices and desires. For surely, the libertarian urges, if it is determined that our desires will cause us to perform certain actions, then not even we ourselves could

[35] See Cicero *De Finibus*, III and Diogenes Laertius, VII, 86-108.

[36] Sorabji assumes a similar interpretation (DD, 262).

prevent them doing so. In what sense, then, can we really be said to act freely or be responsible for our acts?

Consent as Exempt from Causal Determination

Suppose that the Analogy represents the Stoics' capitulation to the libertarian: even though we cannot choose, or act, otherwise than we do, we may at least choose whether or not to *consent* to what we have to do. If we consent then in a certain sense we do what we do of our own accord since consent, at least, is exempt from prior determination. (Such a solution to the free will problem would of course be reminiscent of that proposed in the *Tractatus* and *Notebooks*, 73, 76-78, 81-82, by Wittgenstein.)

But on this reading the passage is internally inconsistent. For how could an analogy, whose point is to show that consent is *exempt* from prior determination, be used to illustrate 'the universal rule of fate'? Moreover if despite the inconsistency the Stoics were proposing this kind of solution to the free will problem, then they would have had to explain how consent which occurs outside the causal order, and so presumably has no causal efficacy, could change actions, or even states of mind occurring within that order. (For the wise dog in the Analogy who complies with his master ceases to be dragged, and instead 'follows'.) But there is no apparent awareness of this difficulty.[37] Finally, even if Hippolytus's passage did represent the Stoics as countenancing a break in the Great Causal Chain to preserve freedom, it would conflict sharply with the testimony of the central commentators, according to whom (as we have seen) the Stoics were adamant that:

> Everything that comes about in any way whatever in the whole universe and in any of its parts will necessarily have come about conformably with that nature and its reason in due and unimpeded sequence, for neither is there anything to obstruct the organization from without nor is any of its parts susceptible of being moved or of assuming any state save in conformity with universal nature. (Pl: DeSR, 1050d)

Overdetermination: Davidson; Frankfurt's Willing Addict

But the idea that an individual's own power is united with 'necessity' when he does of his own accord what will otherwise be compelled suggests another possible reading of the passage. The Stoic Analogy might be taken as an attempt to throw back the libertarian challenge by asserting, in the

[37] Compare Wittgenstein's attempt to deal with this problem, *Notebooks*, p. 78.

manner of Davidson, that even when we cannot act otherwise than we do we may still sometimes act freely, and of our own free will.

For suppose that our desire to act in a certain way is such that we would still have performed the action, even if it had not also been independently determined. Would it not then be plausible to claim, as does Davidson in his contemporary version of this argument, that, though we could not have done otherwise (since it was in any case fated that we act in that way), we still also acted of our own free will? Our desires still form part of a causal chain which results in our action. But the significance for free will of this case is that our desires (and the causal chain that includes them) are now set over and against an inexorable necessity or fate which would also have produced the act.

But Davidson's example[10] and the Dog Tied to Waggon Analogy differ in subtle ways. There are, for instance, two kinds of case of which the counterfactual 'even if x hadn't wished to do y, he would still have been caused to do it by external forces' might be asserted. In both cases, the agent's desire and external forces are independently sufficient to produce a given effect. But only in the former are both the desire and external forces actually efficacious. In the latter, external forces only come into operation when the desire is absent. Whilst Davidson probably has in mind the former case (and perhaps only where this symmetry is present do we have true overdetermination[38]), it is the latter case which the Stoic Analogy suggests. For though the dog must follow the waggon, if he runs alongside it, then the rope slackens and no longer drags him. However the contrast between the two types of case might perhaps be undermined by questioning the coherence of the whole notion of symmetrical overdetermination.[39]

A second, and possibly more serious, point is that Davidson is not concerned with cases where an individual's reason for choosing to perform some action is merely his belief that there exist independent forces which would otherwise compel him to do it. It is moreover doubtful whether such an individual would be acting of his own free will by Davidson's criteria. But the Stoic Analogy suggests this kind of case. It might be of course that

[38] It is difficult, however, to think of examples here (assuming that the external forces are physical) which are neither dubious nor contrived. To see this, one only has to imagine a man trying to raise his arm intentionally, whilst his arm is also being raised mechanically.

[39] It might be said that a burglar alarm rings no more loudly when set off by simultaneous entry in two parts of a house than it does when set off by any single entry. If the alarm bell ringing is considered as the only effect then this may be true. But many hold that if a causal path is traced beyond the superficial ringing of the bell other effects will be found which differentiate the two situations.

the dog keeps up with the waggon just because he enjoys running, though perhaps he has cultivated this enjoyment because he sees the wisdom of co-operation with necessity. But it seems more likely that, in these circumstances, where he feels the rope pulling him the moment he slackens his pace, that he doesn't want to run at all and simply wants to avoid the pain of being dragged: he has submitted to, or 'accepted', necessity. This last case, unlike the others, would not however support the counterfactual 'even if external forces had not been sufficient to cause x to do y he would still have done y because he wanted to' which justifies the ascription of freedom on Davidson's account. But perhaps there is still a kind of freedom in voluntary submission to necessity.

The real difficulty, however, with attempting to elucidate the Stoic position, on the above interpretation, by reference to Davidson is that Davidson, unlike the Stoics, as presently represented, would not assert of *every* free action that is performed that, if the agent had not desired to perform it, he would still have been constrained to do so by an independent necessity.

Thus it becomes apparent just how deeply alien, despite its seemingly contemporary reverberations, is the view now being attributed to the Stoics. For the Stoic notion of an 'independent necessity', as here understood, cannot be identified with anything that might ordinarily constrain action, since ordinary constraints may, or may not, be present with regard to particular actions. It would accordingly have to be construed as some kind of 'force' which stands 'over and against' events and actions, preventing them from deviating from, or coercing them into, the fated path.

Now it cannot be denied (see section 1) that, despite the philosophical difficulties[40] and obscurities implicit in characterizing fate, or necessity, as an independent entity, the early Stoics did sometimes represent fate as a god(dess) ruling over the universe (Alex: DeF, 22 '...they call Destiny herself ...a goddess'). On the other hand that Stoic fate was a transcendent deity would have to be assessed against the extreme form of pantheism associated with Stoic thought. Moreover, even when fate is personified it is typically as a householder or administrator and not as a coercive agency. I

[40] To make sense of this idea one would have to distinguish between an individual's just fulfilling, and his being constrained to fulfil, his fated destiny. But this may well be impossible: was Oedipus constrained by fate to kill his father and marry his mother or did these actions occur just 'in the natural course of events'? And does it make sense to speculate, as does Auden ('Macbeth and Oedipus' in *Shakespeare's Tragedies*, ed. Lerner) as to what would have happened if Oedipus had just 'sat and waited in Corinth' vowing never to strike anyone?

shall return to this point later, but conclude here by showing that the interpretation is in any case incompatible with the key Stoic doctrine regarding action, as represented by the chief ancient commentators (see section 2).

It has just been suggested that the Stoics may have introduced overdetermination in order to be able to say that, even though there always exist external forces sufficient to produce our actions, we nevertheless act freely whenever we want to do what in fact we have to do. But, for the Stoics, the idea that external forces alone could be sufficient for an action's occurrence contradicts their principle that only if we had deliberately chosen to act in the way we did would we have acted at all.

The original account of overdetermination might, however, be amended so that the focus of overdetermination is not now the action itself but rather our desire to perform it, so that even if what we do is overdetermined this would no longer entail that we would have done it, if we hadn't wanted to do it.

Frankfurt's twofold classification of desires[41] is useful in articulating this type of overdetermination. Briefly, for Frankfurt, we may be spontaneously or unreflectively motivated by 'first order' desires. However, on reflection, we may either endorse, or reject, these desires and form so-called 'second order' desires with which (as Frankfurt puts it) we 'identify' ourselves, for they involve our considered appraisal of our 'first order' desires.

Suppose now that we only want to be motivated by a particular first order desire but that to achieve this we have to suppress another first order desire which nevertheless continues to motivate our actions (because of forces which determine its efficacy independently of our second order wishes). We will then experience this irrepressible desire as an inexorable compulsion to which we must submit. Thus our first order desires may be a cause of actions which are either in accordance with, or in opposition to, our second order wishes. A more subtle version of the overdetermination of action now arises whenever the first order desire that produces action is simultaneously determined both by our second order desire (for we want thus to be motivated) and by forces independent of our second order desires.

Frankfurt gives an illuminating example of how a kind of freedom may plausibly be ascribed to an individual whose actions are nevertheless overdetermined in just this manner. Considering the case of an addict who

[41] H. Frankfurt, 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person', *Journal of Philosophy* 68, 1971, 5-20.

actually wants (has a second order desire) to yield to his craving for drugs, he argues that it may be illegitimate to say that this individual's will is free since, such is the strength of his addiction, he has no choice but to take the drugs. But he may still be described as acting of his own free will since he is quite willing to be motivated to take drugs and wants his desire to take the drugs to be effective. Thus he might seem to illustrate that union of an individual's 'own power' with 'necessity' to which Hippolytus's passage alludes.

Leaving aside however doubts (similar to those raised in the comparison with Davidson) as to how complete the parallel really is, even using Frankfurt's willing addict as a model for understanding the Analogy will not render it consistent with the Stoics' general position on freedom. The reason, though, is worth considering in some detail since it illuminates their general position further. A crucial consequence of Frankfurt's account is that first order desires, and the actions that spring from them, are in our power only if the causal chain from which they result includes rather than bypasses our second order desires. But not only are there no explicit equivalents to Frankfurt's second order desires in the Stoic theory, but their introduction is unnecessary since as we saw in section 2, impulse and assent which, for the Stoics, were the immediate causes of action, and so are the only plausible candidates for identification with Frankfurt's first order desires, were necessarily in our power, just as were the actions to which they gave rise.

In fact Frankfurt violates more than just the Stoic principle that no action can be sufficiently determined by external forces. According to Frankfurt, we identify ourselves only with our second order desires and those first order desires that we endorse at the second level. Consequently, desires which, though not thus endorsed, continue to motivate us 'externally', compel us. On Frankfurt's view then desire itself can represent a source of unfreedom. But the Stoics maintained, quite contrarily, not only that all action is necessarily free, but that it is precisely the special causal role of the agent's desire (his 'impulse' and 'assent') in producing action that guarantees that freedom. To interpret Hippolytus's passage, then, on the model of Frankfurt's willing addict would distort the Stoic account of freedom even more than the previous interpretation.

4. *Agent-Causalism and Autonomy: A Reappraisal of the Stoic Theory of Freedom*

It should be clear by now that not only is it difficult to produce a satisfactory

interpretation of the Dog Tied to Waggon Analogy assuming that it concerns determinism, but also that any such interpretation will almost certainly conflict with the central doctrines of early Stoicism. I will consider the broader implications of these inconsistencies in the next section, but first want to take up again the nature of the Stoics' general position on freedom, which, though shown (in section 2) not to be that of traditional soft determinism, still lacks positive characterization.

As we have just seen, the Stoic identification of freedom with the distinctive causal structure of action is quite alien even to those recent soft determinist accounts, such as Frankfurt's and Davidson's, which dispense with the alternative possibilities requirement. May it not be that the first Stoics were, perhaps surprisingly given the prevailing view among modern commentators, more akin to certain contemporary agent-causalists, such as Richard Taylor or even Chisholm?[42]

Certainly it would seem that only if we construe the early Stoics as agent-causalists are we able to make coherent their idea that impulse, assent and action are necessarily in our power. For it is just because agent-causalists, such as Taylor and Chisholm, reject the attempts (by soft determinists and others) to break down agency into a sequence of events, such as desiring and acting, each linked as antecedent to consequent in the ordinary event-causal manner, that they are able to represent the bond between agent and action as so intimate that 'external forces' cannot conceivably either compete with or usurp the role of the agent in producing action. On this reading of the Stoics moreover, assent and impulse *are* themselves the special causal powers of agency, and thus it becomes clear why they should diverge so sharply from Frankfurtian first order desires, *over which*, by contrast, the agent may said to *have* (or not to have) power.

But is there evidence in the early Stoic texts of a type of causation distinct from ordinary event-causation and particularly associated with action? And could a system as rigorously deterministic as the Stoics' accommodate two types of causation that differ as radically as agent-causation and event-causation? And since, according to such writers as Alexander and Nemesius, the Stoics compared human action with the behaviour of animals and even of inanimate objects, would even the latter on such an interpretation have to be regarded as agent-causes?

In reply to the first question we might point again to the Stoic distinction

[42] R. Taylor, *Action and Purpose* (Englewood Cliffs, 1966), pp. 108-119; R. Chisholm, 'Freedom and Action', in *Freedom and Determinism*, ed. Lerner (New York, 1966), pp. 14-44.

between principal and proximate causes which, particularly with regard to action, cannot be captured simply by treating principal causes (as most commentators have treated assent and impulse) as those antecedents of an action which contribute most to its occurrence: principal causes were not, unlike proximate causes, *antecedent* conditions of action at all (Clement: Stromateis, VIII, 8). Moreover, not only was the principal cause associated with the agent in a way that proximate causes were not, but, unlike proximate causes, it produced action (as we have already noted) in some sense autonomously. 'It is called', writes Clement, 'αὐτοτελές because self-sufficiently through itself alone and independently of anything else (αὐτάρκως δι'αὑτοῦ) it is capable of producing the outcome' (Stromat., VIII, 9). But such an idea, whilst definitive of agent-causalism, simply cannot be captured within a traditional soft deterministic framework.

Again, whilst contemporary agent-causalists have generally been anti-deterministic and are sometimes accused of positing a substantive, extra-empirical self, it is by no means clear that there is any intrinsic illogicality in both being deterministic and maintaining that the agent-causal relation is conceptually irreducible, provided a distinction is also acknowledged between two mutually exclusive levels of description. (For a modern example, see the dual standpoint theory of J. Bishop.[43]) Finally, as to the Stoics' comparison of human action with other types of behaviour, whilst writers like Alexander and Nemesius may well have been exaggerating the similarity in order to ridicule the Stoics, it would nevertheless be quite consistent with Stoic pantheism for non-humans to be agent-causes.

But surely to say that the agent-causalist must, if he is also a determinist, recognize a dual perspective is just another way of saying that he must allow that there is *some* sense in which the individual who acts has the power *not* to act in that way? For what otherwise would be the significance of claiming that it is the *agent* himself who causes his action? Yet the early Stoics apparently did not associate the power to do otherwise with the exercise of agency (see Chrysippus's reply to the Lazy Argument).

Admittedly, the question of whether an individual could have done otherwise when he acted is not *intrinsic* to agent-causalism as it is, for instance, to traditional soft deterministic ascriptions of freedom. For whilst the external circumstances in which someone acts are crucial for these latter ascriptions, it is enough for the agent-causalist that the individual simply acts, since, according to him, the source of freedom is the distinctive causal structure of action itself.

[43] J. Bishop, 'Agent-Causalism', *Mind* 92, 1983.

On the other hand, the agent-causalist, unless he also happens to be a purely logical fatalist, assumes a background of ordinary causal relations between events. And since agent-causalism is evidently not compatible (as e.g. Davidson's brand of soft determinism may appear to be) with situations in which external forces have equal causal claims with the agent himself, the opportunity for agency can only exist where there are no sufficient causes to pre-empt its exercise.

Now the opportunity for an individual to act can still be present even in a situation where he lacks in any *effective* sense the power to do otherwise. He may, for instance, deliberately choose to produce a state of affairs himself rather than leave alien forces to cause it, as otherwise they will. But even in this situation the individual exercises a minimal choice between different courses of action. Even this link however between the exercise of agency and the power to do otherwise is absent from the early Stoic account of freedom.

This objection, however, reveals something new and interesting: the difficult with construing the early Stoics as agent-causalists lies not in the *fact* that their determinism excludes alternative possibilities but merely in the *way* it (apparently) does. A purely logical fatalism, for instance, excludes alternative possibilities without in any way undermining the integrity of the agent-causal relation. But so far, in discussing Stoic freedom, we have followed modern commentators in treating these ancient philosophers as straightforward causal determinists of a relatively modern type, for whom the thesis that there exist sufficient antecedent conditions for everything that occurs might be expected to have been essential. So it may be tempting to suppose that their exclusion of alternative possibilities of action rested upon this thesis in a manner inconsistent with agent-causalism.

But we know (see section 1) that Stoic determinism involved teleological and pantheistic elements which, though conflicting with, are difficult fully to disentangle from the more recognizably modern elements: the Great Causal Chain was still seen on the one hand as the product of animate and inanimate agents, inexorably carrying out the decrees of fate, and on the other as the interrelated activity of the parts of an organic unity, not requiring external regulation. It would hardly be surprising if the Stoics had not yet worked out the consequences for human freedom of a purely mechanistic determinism which had not itself been isolated from more ancient fatalistic ideas, and thus continued to base their affirmation of freedom and responsibility upon a conception of agency as logically primitive.

Suppose now that one believed (as many passages testify that the Stoics believed) that the universe was a harmonious whole, rationally administered, in which each individual had his appointed role to play in some overall design. Would it be so implausible, against this background of beliefs, both to deny that human action could ever be the mere passive effect of antecedent circumstances (since it must be actively initiated by an agent), and yet to assert that, when an individual acts, he only ever does so in strict, though spontaneous, accordance with fate's decrees, so that there is no chance that he will deviate from his fated path? Moreover, even the idea that fate in some sense imposes certain ends or purposes on the agent, obliging him to act to fulfil them (cf. Calcidius: 'the movements of our minds are mere instruments for carrying out determined decisions since it is necessary that they be performed through us by the agency of fate' SVF II, 94), is offset by the Stoic conviction that the individual, being a part of the Great Whole, was himself partly author of those very ends and purposes.

It will already be apparent that the agent-causalism here being attributed to the early Stoics can bring no comfort to those still seeking parallels between these ancient philosophers and today's thinkers. Indeed no contemporary philosopher, so far as I know, has ever supposed that a notion of agent-autonomy, so baldly shorn of its implications of alternative possibilities of action, as the early Stoic fatalist presented it, and without the benefit of a dual standpoint theory which could soften the apparent inconsistency with an accompanying causal determinism, could support attributions of moral responsibility in anything like the way our more full-blooded conception of freedom does.

One can only wonder, then, at the overwhelming conviction with which the early Stoics did in fact affirm men's responsibility for their actions. Almost paradoxically, in view of their fatalistic determinism, the extraordinary expansion of their notion of responsibility, which results from the apparent absence of any ordinary system of excuses, constitutes one of the major gulfs between early Stoic and contemporary thought. For whilst agent-causalists, like e.g. Chisholm, provide general criteria for distinguishing between actions as the bearers of freedom and things that just happen to, or in spite of, the agent, they do not regard this latter category as crudely co-extensive with involuntary movement; it includes what an individual does unwillingly, in ignorance, when overcome by desire, and so on. The early Stoics, on the other hand, at least on the evidence of the texts that have survived, adhered to an altogether starker, less subtle view: if what we do is intentional under any description, if, that is, it is not just a matter of involuntary movement, then we act freely and must bear

responsibility for our deeds. This is the import of that harsh passage in which Aulus Gellius quotes Chrysippus verbatim thus:

> 'the carrying out of action (is) regulated by each individual's own will and the characteristics of his mind... therefore it is said by the Pythagoreans:
>
> > You will learn that men suffer ills which they themselves
> > Bring on themselves,
>
> for harm comes to each of them through themselves, and they go astray through their own impulse and are harmed by their own purpose and determination.' Therefore (Chrysippus) says that the wicked, slothful, sinful and reckless men ought not to be endured... who, when they are caught fast in guilt and sin, take refuge in the inevitable nature of fate, as if in the asylum of some shrine, declaring that their outrageous actions must be charged, not to their own heedlessness, but to fate. (NA, Bk, 7, II)

But once this ruthless stance concerning the attribution of responsibility and blame is compared with either that of an agent-causalist like Chisholm or that of Frankfurt (who would wish at least to exempt the unwilling addict from responsibility, despite the part his desires play in producing his action) the extent of divergence even in moral outlook between the ancient and modern accounts of freedom and action is apparent.

The early Stoics were perhaps in certain respects the heirs of the Greek tragedians whose conception of fate they commended and whose moral outlook their own so often, and so strikingly, evokes. Oedipus, for instance, (in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*) is held guilty of killing his father and marrying his mother even though he was fated to commit these deeds. Nor is he even exonerated of guilt by not having intended to carry out these actions which he was fated to perform. For Oedipus did not intentionally kill his father and marry his mother yet he says:

> I have done things deserving worse punishment than hanging (line 1380)

and again:

> To this guilt I bore witness against myself
> Now I am found to be a sinner and a son of sinners (line 1158)

Unfortunately, however, there is no space here to develop further this comparison between early Stoic moral attitudes and those expressed in the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles.

Stoic Pantheism and the Willing Subject

If the comparison with Frankfurt shed light upon some of the mysteries surrounding the Stoic account of freedom as we left it at the end of section

2, there still remains the problem of how to deal with the passage from Hippolytus. There seems little to choose between either of the interpretations considered in section 3 since each is inconsistent with some central feature of early Stoic thought. The first represented the Stoics as placing the willing self outside the determined order so as to guarantee freedom which is incompatible with the fundamental Stoic claim that 'necessity' extends to 'everything'. Both versions of the second interpretation, apart from their questionable characterizations of Stoic fate, relied upon a distinction, within the determined order, between doing something of our own accord and being compelled to do it, which it proved impossible to draw, given the Stoic account of action and freedom, as we have it from such writers as Cicero, Aulus Gellius, Plutarch and Alexander. On the other hand the type of agent-causalism we have finally attributed to the Stoics represents the individual as acting in a kind of harmonious accord with fate, as co-author of its ends – a picture of co-operation that contrasts sharply with that conveyed by the Analogy.

Yet despite the difficulty in interpreting this passage I still believe that it records an attempt by the Stoics to come to grips with the problem posed for freedom by their thesis of determinism and should not be dismissed as, unexcitingly, just a restatement of that thesis. Indeed I do not see how it could be thus dismissed. For this would be to overlook the significance of the allusion (virtually unique in early Stoic discussions of freedom) to the individual who does *not want* to do what he is fated to do, and whose will, being thus in some way at odds with universal necessity, has to be coerced by necessity.

It is impossible, of course, to say just what this allusion might have signified or exactly what inferences concerning a shift in the Stoics' conceptual framework might be drawn from it. But it is plausible to speculate that here, probably for the first time in Stoic thought, there begins to emerge that metaphysical conception of a 'willing subject' which 'stands over and against' the whole determined world.[44] Yet such a conceptual innovation (familiar to anyone conversant with traditional libertarian and early Wittgensteinian discussions of free will) would have seemed alien, even revolutionary, to the early Stoics. It might even have been resistance to such a picture of the relation between the self and the world that prevented them from fully articulating the free will/determinism conflict, and thus from grappling with it except by a confused, though suggestive, analogy.

Let us finally consider the kind of reasons (already hinted at in the last

[44] See Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, p. 80 and p. 82.

section) that there might have been for Stoic resistance to making a conceptual distinction opposing the willing subject to a determined external world.

Firstly the self or subject is, according to the new picture, 'split off' from the world; but the Stoic self or soul was explicitly conceived of as a part of, not distinct from, the material universe. As Alexander wrote: 'The souls of living beings are parts of the soul of the whole world'.

Again, the determined world is typically construed on the new picture as constituted of blind, mechanical forces. But the Stoic universe is a divine and rational order in which as Plutarch wrote: 'Nothing ... either rests or is moved otherwise than according to the reason of Zeus' (SVF, II, 937c). And the many references to the Stoic universe as a 'household' run by a beneficent master (Alex: SVF, II, 945; Pl: SVF, II, 645) suggest a kind of harmony between the individual and the universe similar to that which Hegel supposed actually to have existed between the citizen and the ancient Greek city-state.

Finally, the new picture, in setting the human subject brutally apart from the world, accords to him a certain pre-eminence. This pre-eminence has taken different forms. Traditional libertarians, for instance, claim that human beings have a power (denied to all other creatures or things) to influence events. For the early Wittgenstein, however, the human subject is privileged in that he alone can consent to his own powerlessness. But surely such human pre-eminence, whether of the former or the latter kind, is contrary to the spirit of Stoic pantheism which construed everything in the universe as part of a divine order, and held this divine order to be a god. As Themistius wrote:

> ...the Stoics hold that God pervades every substance, and in some part of the world is mind, in another soul or nature, or cohesion. (SVF, I, 158)

Yet care must be taken not to overstate the case. For whilst the early Stoics did stress the continuity between, for instance, animal and human behaviour (and even, if Origen is to be believed, classed men and animals together with fire, metals and water springs as 'self-movers') this continuity was, as modern commentators remind us, 'offset by a sharp break'.[45] For man, being a rational creature, was considered, unlike other creatures (who had no *logos*) to be, as Long puts it, a 'particular *logikos*':

> Not all of God has planned the individual's life in isolation (whether temporal or spatial) from him since there is a portion of God which is not external but inherent in every human being, namely his own *logos*. (PIS, 179)

[45] S. G. Pembroke, 'Oikeiosis' in PIS, p. 121.

Even so, one may well wonder whether the early Stoics ever felt, with quite the same intensity, that craving to which Wittgenstein alludes in the *Tractatus* and with which the first Stoic commentators were already familiar, to 'procure', in Wittgenstein's words, a 'pre-eminent place' for human beings in the hierarchy of living creatures and inanimate things. Perhaps in one sense at least a Stoic like Chrysippus regarded (to quote Wittgenstein again):

> Humans and animals quite naively as objects which are similar and which belong together. (*The Notebooks*, 82)[46]

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